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Research Paper

Examining the Independence of News Products from Media Owners with Political Backgrounds

Panel 3

Role of Media, Journalism, and Information Literacy in the Disinformation Era

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Abstract

This research examines how the media aligns with the three presidential candidates who will contest the 2024 general election, both for the supported and rival candidates. The aim is to see the independence of media companies affiliated with the political choices they believe in through the news they package. This study uses content analysis of 3 online news media affiliated with candidate pairs and classified as 16 online media in Indonesia with significant audience intensity based on the Digital News Report 2023 by Reuters Institute. The three media are Metro TV News Online (affiliated with Surya Paloh as Chairman of the Nasional Demokrat Party), TVOne News (affiliated with Aburizal Bakrie as Chairman of the Golongan Karya Party Board of Trustees), and Okezone (affiliated with Hary Tanoesoedibjo as Chairman of the Persatuan Indonesia Party). These three media are affiliated with politicians from different political parties and support different presidential candidates (as of August 2023), with the Nasdem Party supporting Anies Baswedan, the Golkar Party siding with Prabowo Subianto, and the Perindo Party confirming its support for Ganjar Pranowo. This analysis uses 998 news articles as analysis samples, and the researcher summarizes how the findings were obtained based on each news highlight featured from September 1 to 30, 2023. The results show that the three media outlets did not show their independence in their coverage of each presidential candidate, which can be seen from the percentage of coverage of each presidential candidate and the tone of the headlines and news content of each presidential candidate, based on the candidate's affiliation with the media company.

Keywords: *Media Conglomeration, Media Independence, 2024 Presidential Candidates, Content Analysis.*

Background

Indonesia's political dynamics, approaching the 2024 presidential election, are moving dynamically and not spared being colored by political intrigue. Referring to research conducted by Indonesia Indicator, it is noted that from a total of 20,194,242 news presented by 8,244 online media in Indonesia during the period January 1-December 2022, political news or the 2024 Election became the first most published topic, reaching 973,647 news (Sunda, 2023). The rampant exposure to news and information received by the public regarding the 2024 elections also has an impact on the level of spread of information disorders, which is relatively high and alarming, as evidenced by the findings of the CSIS Indonesia and Google Indonesia collaboration research, where 42.3% of the public admitted to believing in misinformation (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2023). Reflecting on the 2019 elections, throughout the series of elections since August 2018, there were 1,731 hoaxes identified, and the political category dominated 620 hoax items (Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informatika Republik Indonesia, 2019).

In the political context, social media has become a platform for audiences to contribute to the national discourse, monitor the behavior of public officials, and obtain government issues of interest (Olaniyan & Akpojivi, 2021). However, the problem is that people tend to be easily influenced by a variety of information that cannot be confirmed, compared to news published through mass media and professional journalists (Golovchenko et al., 2018). This condition has an impact on changes in media usage behavior, which has implications for social, cultural, economic, and political changes (Adhiarso et al., 2019), especially in influencing public views on the general election contestation that will be held (Holmes & Sulistyanto, 2016). Of course, by making credible mass media coverage a preference, the public will receive information, be educated, and specifically avoid imaging or attacks on certain political groups (Prayogi et al., 2020).

In mass media reporting that emphasizes independence and constructive journalism, there are elements consisting of orientation towards solutions, the future, focus on inclusiveness, and diversity of perspectives and sources, as well as involving the community and increasing their participation in society (Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019). Good journalistic work has a central principle that focuses on public service and an excellent democratic climate by revealing the truth of the news presented (Forde, 2012).

The trend of utilizing digital devices by the public lately has also encouraged mass media companies to transform and follow the needs of markets that prefer online and audiovisual media (Nugroho et al., 2012). This convergence trend has also penetrated the entire media industry in Indonesia and expanded to various digital platforms (Sumartias & Hafizni, 2017). However, this process of migration and adaptation in practice contradicts many of the edicts contained in the Broadcasting Law No. 32 of 2002, such as "requiring fair business competition" in article 5, paragraph 7, and "limited ownership" in article 18, paragraph 1 (Akalili, 2020).

The oligarchic media owners with political interests shaped the industry through convergence. Then, the popularity of social media made them quickly become part of multiplatform mainstream media sites (Tapsell, 2015b). Unfortunately, the trend of large media conglomerates in Indonesia using convergence to limit the fragmentation of the

media industry by merging companies and unifying platforms, then dominating news in Indonesia (Tapsell, 2014).

This media ownership and control also seems to support an essential aspect of the argument that oligarchs continue to use much political power to influence the audience substantively (Tapsell, 2015a). The media, as part of the fourth pillar of democracy, should inform and represent everything in a balanced and fair manner instead of siding with the interests of the majority or certain parties to reap profits (Setiawan et al., 2022). The position of the mass media, which has an impact on the way democracy works, will undoubtedly be disrupted and will be very dangerous if the supply of information is concentrated on one value or view of the media owner (Souisa, 2017).

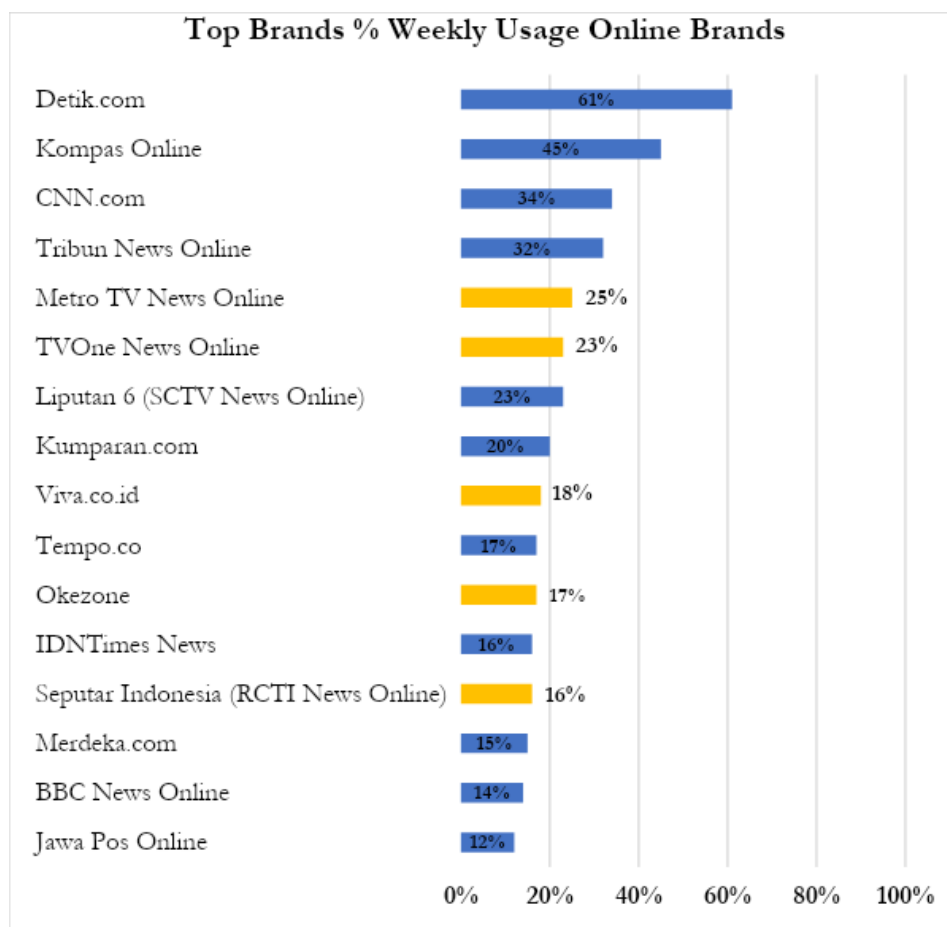


Figure 1: Percentage of 16 media with the most weekly users in Indonesia (Source: Reuters Institute for the study of Journalism (Newman et al., 2023))

In the context of the presidential election to be held in 2024, there are at least three presidential candidates who are participating in this five-year contest and have also determined their companions, including the pair 1) Anies Rasyid Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar; 2) Ganjar Pranowo and Mohammad Mahfud Mahmodin; and 3) Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka (Pinter Politik, 2023). The three pairs were also supported by party leaders affiliated with mainstream media in Indonesia. According to the Digital News Report 2023, there are 16 online media with significant audience reach in Indonesia; of these, five online media are affiliated with political leaders, such as Metro TV News Online, TVOne News Online, and Viva.co.id, Okezone, and Seputar Indonesia (RCTI News Online) (Newman et al., 2023, p. 133).

The Nasional Demokrat (Nasdem) Party, which supports Anies Rasyid Basswedan, is led by Surya Paloh as Chairman and owns the Media Group company, of which Metro TV is a subsidiary (Metro TV News, n.d.; Partai Nasdem, n.d.). Then, the Persatuan Indonesia (Perindo) Party, which supports Ganjar Pranowo, has a chairman who is also the President Director of PT MNC Asia Holding Tbk. namely Hary Tanoesoedibjo, whose subsidiary, PT MNC Digital Entertainment Tbk. with Okezone.com media is one of the news sites in its subsidiary (MNC Asia Holding, n.d.; Partai Persatuan Indonesia, n.d.). Finally, there is the Golongan Karya (Golkar) Party as one of the supporters, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, where Aburizal Bakrie is affiliated with the Bakrie Group and its board of directors, although he has been retired since 2004 (Tim Media Fraksi Partai Golkar, 2020; Universitas Bakrie, n.d.).

Press freedom, which has been echoed since the beginning of the reform era in Indonesia, wants to be born freely without any ties or restrictions from any party, whether the government, political parties, or security forces, by seeing certain limitations as a form of social responsibility (Anom et al., 2021). However, the conditions mentioned earlier are an obstacle to accessing fair information to the public, specifically related to information about candidates for the leadership of the Indonesian people in the next period. Based on the above problems, this study aims to determine the tendency of media affiliated with political parties to cover each presidential candidate's figure on their news pages.

Method

This research uses a quantitative method, where content analysis is used. The news sampling process used purposive sampling, with the following criteria:

1. Limited to only one online media affiliated with each presidential candidate.
2. Categorized as written news articles published online
3. Each affiliated media is the media with the highest user intensity based on the Digital News Report 2023 from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism
4. The news topic only focuses on the news of the presidential candidate figure only
5. Limited to news published between September 1 and September 30, 2023.

Based on the above criteria, the media that will be the object of research analysis are Metro TV News Online (affiliated with Surya Paloh as Chairman of the Nasdem Party), TVOne News (affiliated with Aburizal Bakrie as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Golkar Party), and Okezone (affiliated with Hary Tanoesoedibjo as Chairman of the Perindo Party).

Based on the data collection results from the period mentioned, there were a total of 998 online articles sampled in this study.

Table 1: Number of analyzed news articles

No.	Name of Online Media	Frequency of News Article about three presidential candidates
1	metrotvnews.com	205 news articles
2	tvOnenews.com	319 news articles
3	Okezone.com	474 news articles
Total		998 news articles

Source: primary data processed by researchers

As described above, news content analysis is also emphasized to avoid bias in news selection as a prerequisite for maintaining the quality of research through predetermined news criteria (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 99). The news content analysis also recommends paying attention to the figures reported and how the tone of the news is sounded in the article, the use of diction, and the meaning of metaphors displayed in the news (Stemler, 2015) Therefore, the researcher determines several items in the news whose data will be collected so that they can then be analyzed, including:

1. The number of presidential candidates featured in the news
2. The tone of the news displayed against each character
3. Name of the character with the most sound in the news (if there is more than one character featured in the news)
4. If political figures are affiliated with the media in the news, what kind of tone is displayed in the news?

Findings

The analysis results on news articles aired through three online media, metrotvnews.com, tvOnenews.com, and Okezone.com, tend to show only one candidate in each news article. Then, some articles that include the names of 2 to 3 candidates discuss how the electability is published from various survey institutions. Especially in metrotvnews.com and Okezone.com, there is a tendency to provide a positive narrative from the title to the narrative displayed in the news content towards presidential candidates affiliated with each media owner.

Table 2: Number of candidates mentioned in one news article content

Name of Online Media	Frequency of presidential candidates spelled in the news article			Total
	1 Candidate	2 Candidates	3 Candidates	
metrotvnews.com	185	13	7	205
tvOnenews.com	268	23	28	319
Okezone.com	446	5	23	474
Total	899	41	58	998

Source: primary data processed by researchers

Table 3: Comparison of news coverage of each presidential candidate in each online media

Name of Media Online	Name of Presidential Candidate	Frequency of Presidential Candidate mentioned in the news article
metrotvnews.com	Anies Baswedan	143
	Ganjar Pranowo	46
	Prabowo Subianto	47
tvOnenews.com	Anies Baswedan	163
	Ganjar Pranowo	127
	Prabowo Subianto	115
Okezone.com	Anies Baswedan	48
	Ganjar Pranowo	438
	Prabowo Subianto	45

Source: primary data processed by researchers

From Table 2 and Table 3 above, we obtained findings on the percentage of coverage of the three presidential candidates in each media. We found that Anies Baswedan topped the list with the most mentions in two media, metrotvnews.com and tvOnenews.com, with percentages of 64.4% and 40.8%, respectively. Meanwhile, on Okezone.com, Anies Baswedan's name came in second place as the most mentioned figure.

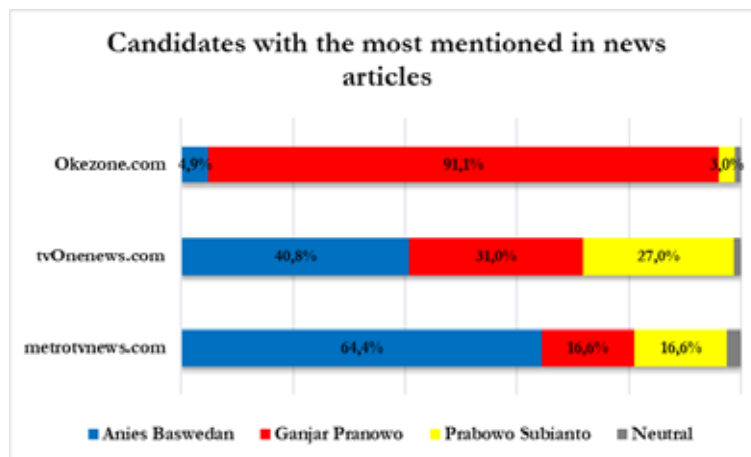


Figure 2: Candidates with the most mentioned in news articles

Source: primary data processed by researchers

Turning to Ganjar Pranowo, his name tops the list on Okezone.com, with the total number of news reports that dominantly mention his name at a percentage of 91.1%. Meanwhile, in the online media metrotvnews.com and tvOnenews.com, Ganjar Pranowo's name was always just below Anies Baswedan's position, with percentages of 16.6% and 31% respectively.

Meanwhile, Prabowo Subianto's name had several mentions in the three media sampled for analysis. The tendency found was that Prabowo Subianto's name was in the last place in all media, starting from metrotvnews.com, with the percentage of news coverage only around 16.6%, then at tvOnenews.com which was only in the range of 27% of news that mentioned his name. Finally, in the context of news coverage on Okezone.com, Prabowo Subianto's name only comprised 3% of the 474 news articles published by Okezone.com.

The tone of metrotvnews.com's reporting on Anies Baswedan

Based on the results of data collection conducted manually on news articles aired on metrotvnews.com, 205 news articles related to presidential candidates aired throughout September 2023. The results of our analysis show that the news tendency is towards Anies Rasyid Baswedan, the presidential candidate promoted by the Nasdem Party, where Surya Paloh acts as Chairman of the Nasdem Party, as well as being the owner of the Media Group, of which metrotvnews.com is a subsidiary. In addition, news related to Anies Baswedan is often colored by statements from Nasdem Party figures, including Surya Paloh, Chairman of the party, with blue shades.

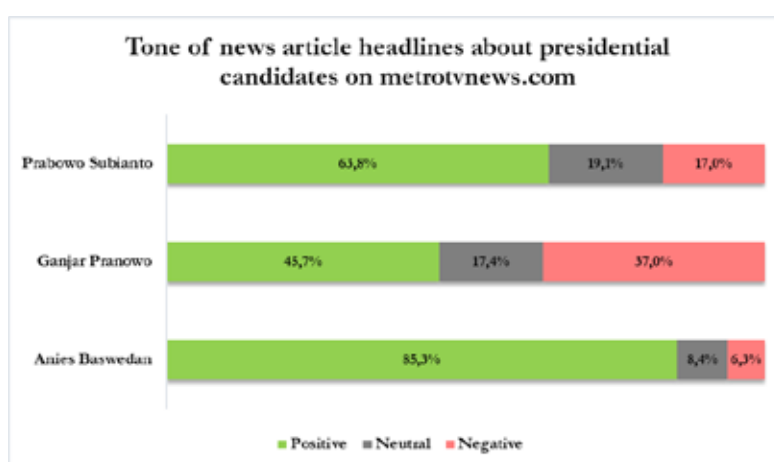


Figure 3: Tone of news article headlines about presidential candidates on metrotvnews.com

Source: primary data processed by researchers

The results of the analysis showed that 85.3% of the news coverage of Anies Baswedan contained a positive tone in the title of the news, such as the narrative of support from religious figures and the religious side of Anies Baswedan and several statements from religious figures or organizations as if representing the figure of Anies Baswedan who has values and views following religious teachings. Not to mention several threats that attacked him, both related to his position as an opposition, further strengthening the message of the diction of "change" through his candidacy as a presidential candidate. In addition, the counter news related to the Demokrat Party resigning and the lack of support from conglomerates also did not escape being a publication that displays a positive impression of Anies Baswedan and the Nasdem Party.

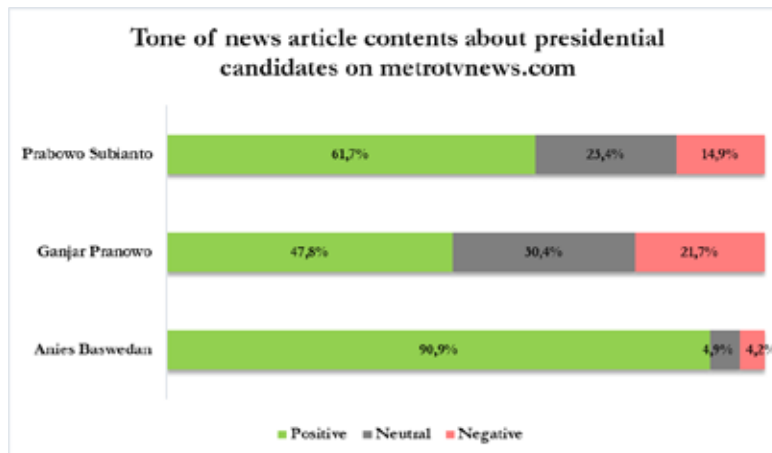


Figure4: Tone of news article contents about presidential candidates on metrotvnews.com

Source: primary data processed by researchers

Meanwhile, the soundbites in the article's content tended to have a positive value compared to those in the headlines, similar to the context of the previously mentioned topics. However, in the context of negative news soundings, the majority stemmed from internal problems within the Coalition for Change, which endorsed Anies Baswedan as a presidential candidate. The news was closely related to the topic of Muhaimin Iskandar's selection as a vice-presidential candidate and the sudden joining of the National Awakening Party (PKB), without coordination with other supporting parties, became negative news that could not be contained to maintain Anies Baswedan's good figure. In addition, several statements of doubt from the Partai Keadilan Sosial (PKS) about the choices made and the exit of the Demokrat Party from the coalition gave the impression that Anies Baswedan and the Nasdem Party were betraying. Although news reports tried to counter these problems with positive headlines, the statements of "political victims" that used diction with negative connotations, both from the Nasdem Party and PKS, were still inevitable in the news writing.

The tone of tvOnenews.com's reporting on Prabowo Subianto Anies Baswedan

In the context of tvOnenews.com online media, there is an exciting finding where Prabowo Subianto's name is the presidential candidate with the most minor mentions compared to Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo. It is despite tvOnenews.com being a subsidiary of PT Viva Media Asia, which is still affiliated with Aburizal Bakrie's family company (where Anindya Novyan Bakrie, Aburizal Bakrie's son, currently acts as President Director of the company). Currently, Aburizal Bakrie himself serves as the Chairman of the Golkar Party's Board of Trustees.

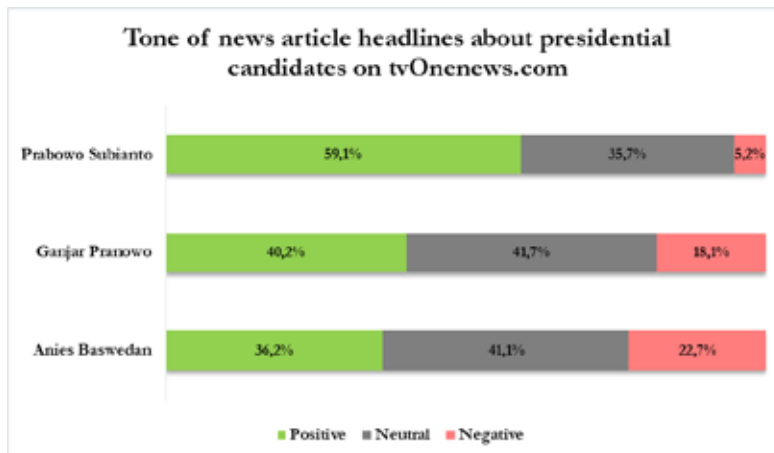


Figure 5: Tone of news article headlines about presidential candidates on tvOnenews.com

Source: primary data processed by researchers

Despite having the least amount of news coverage compared to the other two presidential candidates, Prabowo Subianto's news coverage has the most positive trend compared to the others. Some of the headlines that make the image of Prabowo seem positive can be seen from several cases, such as the "betrayal" of PKB and Muahimin Iskandar towards Prabowo, Prabowo's work program plans if he becomes President in the future (such as the free food program), and Prabowo's electability which has an increasing trend and often becomes the top. Another exciting headline packaging is the news of the Deputy Minister of Agriculture slapping case and indications of authoritarianism if he is elected President, which is dismissed through Prabowo's statements, political elites, and even the President of the Republic of Indonesia so that the headlines seem positive.

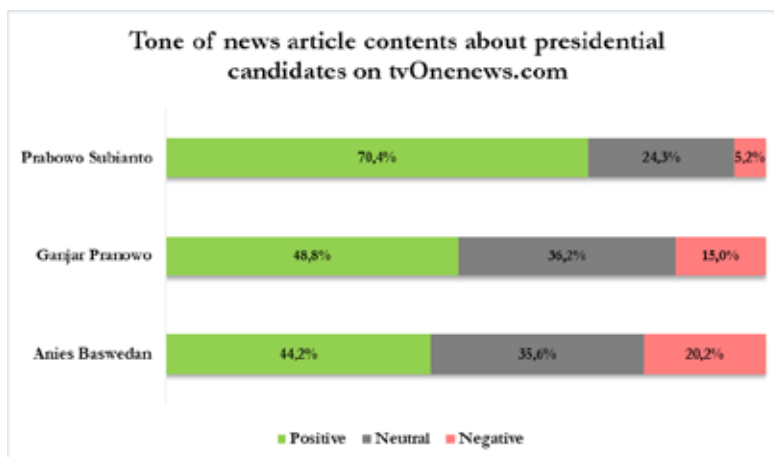


Figure 6: Tone of news article contents about presidential candidates on tvOnenews.com

Source: primary data processed by researchers

Similarly, the content of the news presented in the news, the tendency of positive values can be found in the content of the news, which may be in the title of the news classified as having a title that has a neutral impression. Although the positive impression tends to surround Prabowo Subianto, it does not rule out that there are headlines and news content that cannot be countered as positive. For example, Prabowo's statement that money politics was legalized during the elections. Although

there was a statement by Prabowo to "follow your heart," this was negative and undermined the principles of elections in Indonesia.

The tone of Okezone.com's coverage of Ganjar Pranowo

Okezone.com, one of Indonesia's 16 media with the most readers, places Ganjar Pranowo with the highest news reports. Even comparing the number of news coverage between the two other presidential candidates has a very far gap. The findings obtained during the process of collecting data on news articles, almost all news articles, which did not even include topics about Ganjar Pranowo or even mention Ganjar Pranowo's name, were published using Ganjar Pranowo's name tag. The tendency to write "presidential candidate promoted by Perindo Party" is often found in every news coverage of Ganjar Pranowo. This prominent finding indicates the power relations between media ownership and the Perindo Party management, which is affiliated with Hary Tanoesoedibjo and his family. In addition, another finding that we obtained was how the news of Ganjar Pranowo was packaged like entertainment information, with no critical essence in it.

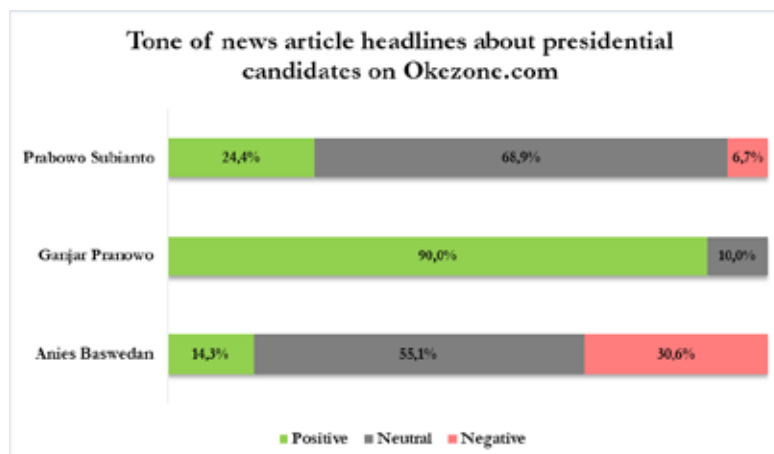


Figure 7: Tone of news article headlines about presidential candidates on Okezone.com

Source: primary data processed by researchers

When referring to the news titles displayed, it can be seen that there is almost no utilization of negatively charged titles against Ganjar. Almost all of the news about Ganjar is packaged positively, as mentioned earlier, which can be seen from news topics related to Ganjar Pranowo's personal and family profiles, how Ganjar Pranowo's framing is seen to be close to volunteers or the community, and several quotes of Ganjar Pranowo's positive statements during the open debate.

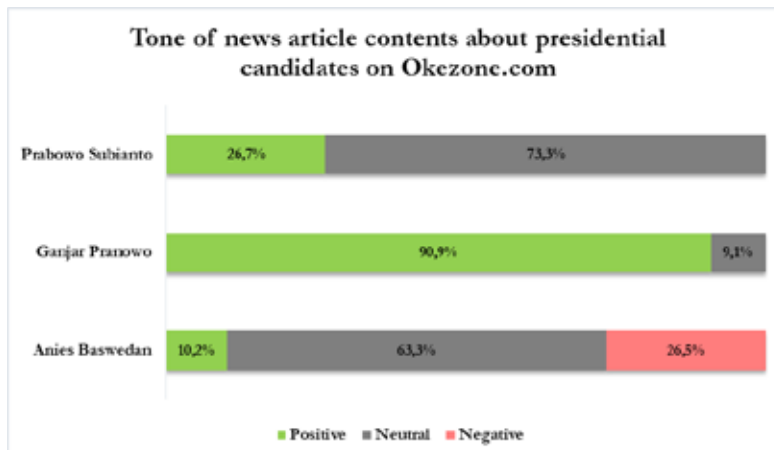


Figure 8: Tone of news article contents about presidential candidates on Okezone.com

Source: primary data processed by researchers

Similar to the title, the narrative built by the writers inevitably gives a positive spin to the news of Ganjar Pranowo. Some examples of diction, such as "young at heart," "handsome," "outstanding," and so on, often adorn most of the Ganjar Pranowo news on Okezone.com. Even in negative contexts, such as Ganjar's statement denigrating the journalist profession, it is packaged with a positive framing to counter the issue. Others, such as Ganjar Pranowo's achievements during his time as governor and his populist leadership style, became accessible material to tell the positive side of Ganjar in the news without telling some cases or realities in Central Java.

Participation of media owners or affiliated persons with the media company in the news articles

The process of reporting on the three presidential candidates is inseparable from the political views of each media, primarily if the media is affiliated with political party officials. The analysis found that media owners or people affiliated with the media (related to kinship relationships and positions held through the media) openly supported each presidential candidate. It is not uncommon for media owners or their affiliates to provide rebuttals if wrong statements attack each presidential candidate.

Table 4.: Visualization or statement of media owners or affiliated persons with the media company in the news article

Name of Online Media	Tone of visualization or statement of the media owner or affiliated person with the media company		Total
	Neutral	Positive	
metrotvnews.com	0	10	10
tvOnenews.com	0	1	1
Okezone.com	16	67	83
Total	16	78	94

Source: primary data processed by researchers

We obtained that Okezone.com included the most statements and visualizations from media owners and their affiliates on the news related to Ganjar Pranowo, namely 83 news articles. Some of the figures we encountered on Okezone.com are Hary

Tanoesoedibjo (the General Chairman of the Central Executive Board of Perindo Party, as well as Executive Chairman of MNC Group), Muhammad Zainul Majdi (National Daily Chairman of the Central Executive Board of Perindo Party as well as Deputy President Commissioner/Independent Commissioner of PT Media Nusantara Citra (MNC) Tbk), Yusuf Mansur (Chairman of the Central Executive Board for the Ummah and Sharia Economy of Perindo Party and shareholder of BABP - PT Bank MNC Internasional Tbk), Syafril Nasution (Chairman of the Central Executive Board for Organizational Affairs, as well as President Commissioner of PT MNC Okezone Network), Angela Herliani Tanoesoedibjo (as Deputy Secretary General for Economic Affairs of Kartini Perindo and Former Director of PT Media Nusantara Citra Tbk). The visualization and news content written in the news are generally positive and in the form of support, both for Ganjar's candidacy and entertainment information related to him.

Furthermore, metrotvnews.com includes the name Surya Paloh, the Chairman of the Nasdem Party and the Chairman of the Media Group, in 10 news articles in metrotvnews.com. The statements discussed Anies Baswedan's figure and the problems that attacked the Coalition for Change. Finally, on tvOnenews.com, there was only one news article that mentioned Anindra Ardiansyah Bakrie (Vice President Director of PT Visi Media Asia Tbk. and son of Aburizal Bakrie, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Golkar Party) who stated with positive nuances on the 2023 National Sports Day event.

Discussion

The trend of media convergence, which is one of the markers of technological development, opens the broadest possible opportunity for the media to migrate in the process of distributing formations to audiences online, with the hope that there will be changes in the culture of receiving more varied and constructive information (Hay & Couldry, 2011; Peil & Sparviero, 2017). This process cannot be separated from how the media makes its products a commodity. In the context of media political economy studies, these news products are still closely related to media power and state power (Wasko, 2014).

The conglomeration carried out by media owners, in addition to making profits, also has the potential to spread ideologies that have an impact on narrowing the space for audiences to obtain credible and diverse information (Hearns-Branaman, 2009). As a result, convergence allows media owners to freely provide information in the name of press freedom, even though they are trampling democracy through their interests (Gilmour & Quanbeck, 2010).

In the Indonesian context, Haryanto (2010) has explained that most of the information displayed by media owners who specifically have political interests does nothing more than accommodate the political aspirations of the owners, and some are packaged like "political newsletters" from media owners. This condition is certainly a dilemma for the democratic climate, where through their media companies, media oligarchs can channel their interests to promote their political choices or attack their political opponents (Tapsell, 2017). With these resources, the media is a force that has a vast impact on the perspective and trends of politics in Indonesia.

When looking at the results of the analysis of news articles from three major news media in Indonesia, consisting of Metro TV News Online, TVOne News, and Okezone, with political figures behind them, it seems to cast doubt on the independence that the

media should carry out. The practice of professionalism that media companies should carry out in carrying out their pillars and functions to move the wheels of democracy in Indonesia seems invisible. It is in line with what Tapsell (2012) said, that in the end, the news is entirely ridden by the interests of media owners and the pressure of the owner's political ideology, so there is no room for criticism and expression for journalists.

Speaking of the analysis results, almost all online media coverage analyzed (except in the context of TVOne News) became a medium for reporting as much information as possible about the presidential candidates they carried. In addition to the relatively large intensity of the news coverage, the percentage of news tones displayed towards presidential candidates supported by media owners as if giving a positive image from only one perspective is considerable. In some news reports, statements from political figures behind the media companies are also inserted, further strengthening the subjectivity of journalistic work rather than objectivity.

This condition violates the journalistic principles that should be upheld, not only for journalists but also for media companies. So it is not surprising that the findings of the three online media contradict the five fundamental ideal values of journalists proposed by Deuze (Shapiro, 2010), namely as public servants, presenting objective information, having independence in work, actuality of information, and ethics and legitimacy of a journalist. Many actions, statements, or leadership traces of the three presidential candidates can be criticized to provide references to the good and bad of these figures so that the public can be more critical and intelligent in determining the direction of their political choices. However, the media conglomeration, with all the political interests of the media owners, restricts the space for democracy, both for journalists and the public.

Conclusion

Media in Indonesia are increasingly ready to face the onslaught of digitalization, marked by convergence by media companies. However, this study found that media convergence only positively impacts media owners through their profits from every article published and political ideologies channeled freely through their media. This condition can harm democracy and close the space for the public to obtain diverse and objective information. The same applies to journalists, who must ultimately sacrifice the values of independence they should embody in carrying out their journalistic duties.

A possible recommendation for this situation is to create regulations or policies that favor the public's right to obtain information and strengthen the bargaining position of journalists in reporting factual and objective news (Olaniyan & Akpojivi, 2021). The critical role of the Press Council (Dewan Pers) and professional organizations of journalists is to voice conditions that violate journalists' ethics and independence. Collaboration on the control in formulating and applying these policies will ensure content diversity (Souisa, 2017).

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